

Trade Mission to Africa

Goodwill and Good Business

by Cory Churches

Export America

In November, Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans led 10 senior executives to Ghana and South Africa on the fourth business development mission for the Bush administration. The mission focused on commercial opportunities for U.S. companies, including joint ventures, presented by the continuing market liberalization and privatization under way in these countries. In both Ghana and South Africa, briefings and business appointments were arranged for members of the delegation.

Two delegation members secured large deals as a result of the mission, and Secretary Evans participated in the signing ceremonies for each. The first was an \$80-million agreement between Lemna International Inc., of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Ghana Water Company. The project will expand and rehabilitate the drinking water systems of Sunyani and 16 other towns and villages, in order to provide clean drinking water to thousands of people.

“Water is a fundamental human need, and repairing, upgrading, and expanding the Sunyani water supply system will have an extremely positive developmental impact on the current population and on the 372,000 people who will be living in the area in 2020. Improvements to the health of citizens and increases in productivity

will directly and indirectly contribute to Ghana’s economic development,” said Viet Ngo, president and CEO of Lemna International.

“This agreement is an outstanding example of what can be achieved through public-private sector cooperation,” said Evans. “Through trade, American companies are helping improve living standards in Africa. Furthermore, as we continue to trade, we will develop economic opportunity and jobs for America’s workers.”

The project is expected to generate nearly \$50 million in U.S. exports, creating and supporting hundreds of

U.S. jobs. In recognition of Lemna’s significant efforts to secure valuable business contracts, received an Export Achievement Certificate from the U.S. Commercial Service in early 2002.

Forest Oil of Denver, Colorado, was equally successful. Bruce Thompson, executive director of Forest Oil’s public and industry affairs, signed a letter of intent with the South African Department of Minerals and Energy, for a natural gas project totaling \$800 million. Forest Oil will develop infrastructure treatment facilities, an offshore gas pipeline from the Atlantic Ocean to Saldanha Bay on the South



Secretary Evans is greeted by a patient at Princess Marie Louise Children's Hospital in Accra, Ghana. The secretary's visit highlighted Boeing's donations to the hospital.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Commercial Service.

African coastline, storage facilities, and metering stations.

As he highlighted U.S. business opportunities and successes, Secretary Evans also emphasized the importance of corporate citizenship, encouraging businesses to answer President Bush's call to use the power of free markets as a tool against poverty.

In Accra, against the backdrop of a hospital that treats children infected with HIV/AIDS, Evans praised U.S. companies that give back to the communities where they do business. The Princess Marie Louis Children's Hospital in Accra lacked basic equipment and appropriate plumbing and heating until U.S. companies, including Boeing, stepped in with financial support.

During a visit to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg, the largest general hospital in the world, Evans cited Pfizer's partnership with the hospital to fight HIV/AIDS as a model of successful corporate citizenship.

Pfizer is providing the drug Diflucan free of charge to government hospitals and clinics throughout South Africa to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. Since the start of the program in 2000, South African hospitals and clinics have distributed 2 million doses of Diflucan. During Evans' visit, Pfizer announced that it would continue to provide these drugs free of charge for an indefinite amount of time—a significant, ongoing contribution to help the many South Africans affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

"When American companies do business overseas, they bring the American values of service, volunteerism, and social responsibility," said Evans. "Businesses have the power to play a big part in unlocking prosperity and providing hope for the people of Africa, and it is projects like this that illustrate the impact of good corporate



Photo courtesy of U.S. Commercial Service.

practice on the lives of people around the world."

Throughout the mission, Secretary Evans reiterated the United States' commitment to pursue a free-trade agreement with the South African Customs Union (SACU). "President Bush believes that free markets and free enterprise are the keys to unlocking social, political, and economic opportunity around the world, especially in Africa," said Evans. "A U.S.-SACU Free Trade Agreement will send a clear signal to the global business community that the SACU countries are developing a strong investment and business climate."

Secretary Evans also praised the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) as an economic model to encourage new investments, jobs, and trade. "Working together, businesses and governments can open new markets and trade opportunities," said Evans. "Increased commercial partnerships between the United States and Africa will make economic prosperity a reality."

Secretary Evans also stated that he believes in the strong partnership

between government and the private sector. Therefore, while in Accra, he launched a new office, stating, "Opening the Commercial Service office is a sign of our continuing commitment to Ghana. And it's a sign of improving business conditions. With this new office, our Commercial Service at the Department of Commerce will have 54 people working in Africa. These folks are here on the ground, working daily to find new business opportunities for American and Africa businesses."

"This is a remarkable period for Africa. For the first time, the needs of Africa and other developing regions are at the center of global trade talks. The United States has seen action on a number of fronts, the WTO meetings in Doha, the G-8 summit last summer, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September. All these efforts show how serious the world is about connecting Africa to the global economy. And the United States is leading the way. This January, President Bush hopes to attend the second annual AGOA Forum." ■